

## MISCELLANY

Under this department are ordinarily grouped: News Items; Letters; Special Articles; Twenty-Five Years Ago column; California Board of Medical Examiners; and other columns as occasion may warrant. Items for the News column must be furnished by the fifteenth of the preceding month. For Book Reviews, see index on the front cover, under Miscellany.

## NEWS

### Stanford Symposium: Harvard Physiologist Urges Medical Attack on Disabilities Accompanying Old Age.

A medical attack on the diseases and disabilities of old age, which have been given new importance by the advancing age level of the general population, was proposed at the Stanford symposium yesterday by Dr. Walter B. Cannon, Harvard University physiologist, in a review of problems confronting the medical profession.

"Almost none of the most prominent disorders of senescence is understood," he said. "The prevailing ignorance, we may assume, is largely due to lack of systematic study.

"Death, of course, must come when one or another vital organ fails its duties, but while life lasts no effort should be spared to make it a good life.

Many Triumphs.—Medical science, Doctor Cannon said, has achieved many a "beneficent triumph" over such diseases as typhoid fever, diphtheria, pellagra, tuberculosis, malaria, yellow fever, hookworm infections and child-bed fever, but it knows much less about diabetes, cancer, hardening of the arteries and other diseases attendant upon advancing age.

Still less, he said, has it done toward conquering calamities of old age that may not kill, but sorely torment, such as rheumatism, chronic inflammation of the bronchial tubes, asthma, persistent itching, "which can render the period of senescence wearisome and miserable."

The importance of attacking these diseases, Doctor Cannon said, comes from the advancing age level of the population because of a decreased birth rate on one hand and a greatly increased life expectancy, largely as a result of medical science, on the other. By 1980, under the present trend, 14 per cent of the population of the United States will be 65 or older—22 millions instead of the 3 millions of forty years ago, he said.

Study Mechanism.—As a foremost subject of study, Doctor Cannon suggested the mechanism which keeps the body's life fluids in delicate balance.

A second new problem presented as a result of the changing social structure, he said, is that of the increase of nervous disorders, manifested by increased insanity, and rate of suicide.

"The ways in which the processes of the brain produce disturbances are little comprehended and the devices which might be employed for prevention or cure have not received the scientific attention which their importance demands," he said. "In the great asylums custodial care continues to be almost the only type of treatment. And meanwhile the problem grows constantly greater and more startling."

The study of drugs and their use in healing is another great and insufficiently explored field challenging medicine, Doctor Cannon asserted.

Drugs Important.—Modern miracles such as the cure of types of insanity, the banishing of diphtheria, the conquering of anemia, have been achieved through the use of drugs, yet "in about a third of the medical schools of the United States there is no independent department devoted to the experimental study of the action of drugs and their use in treating disease."

That these problems be attacked in America becomes more important because of the war in Europe, Doctor Cannon said.

"It seems probable," he declared, "that for years to come the need to repair the wreckage and the appalling waste resultant from the present titanic strife will leave European nations in such poverty that scientific studies will be sadly slighted."

A final problem, Doctor Cannon concluded, is that medical investigators must see to the filling of their own ranks, that the advantages that medical research possesses over general practice be made known to students.—Palo Alto Times, June 19, 1941.

**Colleges Plan Faster Pace.**—To give students complete college educations before they are called for military service, between 400 and 500 liberal arts colleges this fall will offer three-year programs to replace the standard four-year courses.

Summer vacations and holidays will be cut to a minimum, Dr. Guy E. Snively, executive director of the Association of American Colleges, said recently in disclosing the plan.

Doctor Snively said the theory behind the plan is that young men entering college at eighteen—the average age for college entrance—will have completed their college education by the time they have reached draft age. Younger students will not be encouraged to take the speed-up course.

In operation, the plan means that students will attend three terms each year instead of two. Many colleges are making arrangements for twelve-week summer sessions instead of the usual six weeks. More than one hundred will introduce summer courses for the first time next month.

Faculty members will be on call the year round, at least for the duration of the emergency.

He said many institutions are threatened with enrollment losses because of the draft and the volunteering of many students. He declared he believes that the three-year program may be the only way for many small liberal arts colleges to continue in existence.

**Press Clippings.**—Some news items from the daily press on matters related to medical practice follow:

### Medical Association Critics Are Scored

Cleveland, June 3 (AP).—The American Medical Association was exhorted to defend its policies against "destructive criticism by authors whose mental processes seem to have been influenced by Moscow or Berlin."

Retiring President Nathan B. Van Etten of New York accused certain "special interest groups of attacking the American Medical Association as 'a selfish, reactionary, anti-social, restraining influence, opposing activities of those desiring to practice group medicine.'"

"The old idle talk about a small group of persons dictating the policy of the American Medical Association still goes on," he declared before the American Medical Association House of Delegates at the opening of the Association's ninety-second annual meeting.

He reported three American Medical Association executives have been called a "triumvirate of dictators," and identified the three as Dr. Olin West, treasurer; Dr. Morris Fishbein, editor; and Dr. Will C. Braun, business manager, of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"I have never heard or seen any of them attempt to originate any policy," he commented.

A survey showing 95 per cent of the nation's physicians willing to support military service was cited as evidence of the Association's integrity.

The Association's controversial policy of "free choice of physician" was reported to have stood the test of seven turbulent years.

The House of Delegates was called upon to fight for establishment of a national health department to be headed by an officer of cabinet rank.—*Fresno Bee*, June 3, 1941.

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#### Doctor Dukes Elected Vice-President of Medical Association

Dr. Charles A. Dukes of Oakland, a long-time leader in the affairs of organized medicine, is the new vice-president of the American Medical Association.

He was selected yesterday afternoon at the convention of the American Medical Association in Cleveland, according to an Associated Press dispatch.

Doctor Dukes retired a year ago as president of the California Medical Association. He has been vice-president of the American College of Surgeons and president of the Alameda County Medical Society.—*Oakland Tribune*, June 6, 1941.

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#### Sickness and Accidents Are Defense-Effort Foes

Dr. Thomas Parran, Surgeon-General of the United States, declared at a recent meeting of the American Medical Association that it is high time the nation endeavored to make her man power as good as her machines.

The latter rarely break down, but the former do so with slight provocation. Doctor Parran says there were 350,000,000 man days lost in 1940 because of illness and industrial accidents. That is equivalent to 1,000,000 men working a full year. And if 10 per cent of this loss could be prevented it would be sufficient to build twelve cantonments of average size or five battleships or 16,407 combat tanks.

The country should not remain complacent concerning this loss of labor power at a time when national defense calls for the utilization of every bit of available skill because a day's work lost through sickness or preventable accident is gone forever.

That is sufficient reason why every man should do all in his power to guard himself against disease and to preach and practice safety. He owes it to himself and to his country.—*Fresno Bee*, June 18, 1941.

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#### Modern Medicine

(This is the first of a series of articles on some of the ideals and objectives of modern medicine, as defined by the San Francisco County Medical Society.—The Editor.)

The United States, living under its free enterprise system of government—and of medicine—has the lowest death rate in the world today, a report released by the San Francisco County Medical Society declared today.

"The free enterprise system of the United States permits any man to go as far as his abilities will take him," the report stated.

#### Free Enterprise Praised

"All of us know what this free enterprise system has produced. It has given us the highest standard of living in the world. It has given the typical worker a higher paid job and a shorter work-week than is known anywhere else. It has given the average man and woman more of the luxuries and necessities than their counterparts enjoy in any other nation. It has given them more security, in the form of homes, insurance, bank deposits and other forms of saving.

"All of this has been done under that free enterprise system—the individualistic system, so to speak. And that system has given us more than goods and chattels. For example, in the field of medicine we can see again what private enterprise achieves.

#### United States Deaths Far Fewer

"In 1936 there were 11.5 deaths per each 100,000 of population from diphtheria in Germany. There were 8.6 in England. There were but 1.5 in the United States. There is one qualified physician for each 767 people here—as against one for each 1,069 in England, one for each 1,307 in Germany, and one for each 1,596 in France. In the totalitarian states, where Government dominates medicine, and the bureaucrats pick the doctors, almost all diseases are increasing. Here all are decreasing—and rapidly.

"So does American medicine, like American industry, serve. It is private medicine—it is 'free enterprise medi-

cine.' No other system ever devised by man has done so much for the great masses of the people."—*San Francisco News*, April 22, 1941.

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#### Bacteriophage

##### A "Cure-All" Loses Prestige

Twenty-five years ago bacteriophage was the answer to the physician's prayer.

It was the "littlest germ," able to destroy larger germs, and it was going to cure every microbe-caused disease from anthrax to zygomycosis. Optimistic writers prophesied the complete eradication of typhoid fever, cholera, plague, blood poisoning, pneumonia.

That was twenty-five years ago.

Yesterday, Dr. Albert Krueger of the University of California, one of the world's most distinguished authorities on bacteriophage, said the "tiny bacteria slayer" might some day find use in the treatment of dysentery and cholera. But for the others—definitely no.

In a survey published by the American Medical Association, he and Dr. Jane Scribner showed most of the proposed uses of bacteriophage have been ruled out by careful research.

So small that it is invisible under an ordinary high-powered microscope, bacteriophage can probably be detected with the new electron-microscope.—M. M. S.—*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1941.

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#### Council Hears Anderson Tell "Prepay" Plan

A proposal to establish an organization in San Jose, with members securing low-cost medical service under a prepayment plan was outlined to delegates of the Central Labor Council last Friday night by Dr. E. T. Anderson, local physician. Anderson is contacting key union labor organizations in an effort to secure support of the plan.

Tentative arrangements provide home and office medical service at a basic rate of 60 cents per month per member, with flat reduced rate for prescriptions. Several hundred members will be required to launch the Association. Doctor Anderson told the delegates. Asked about hospitalization and major surgical service in connection with such a plan, Anderson said that this type of extended service could be added when the preliminary form of organization had been launched successfully.

Doctor Anderson is a brother of Dewey Anderson, former Assemblyman of Santa Clara County and now a key member of the well-known Temporary National Economic Committee whose report on national social and economic conditions is one of the recent highlights of the Roosevelt Administration.—*San Jose Union Gazette*, May 30, 1941.

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#### Health in Defense

Doctors, scientists, economists, and social welfare experts recently wrestled for three days in a conference at Washington, D. C., called by the President to consider the replacing of vitamins in food which had been "refined out" of it.

Chairman Paul V. McNutt of the nutrition conference declared that we have "failed to keep up a steady flow of dairy products, meats, fruits, and vegetables from the farm to the city tables," and it is time to do something about replacing in certain foods the nutriment that has been taken out of them.

For instance, Dr. James A. Crabtree, medical and nutritional expert, declares that, while bread is the backbone of most American diets, it is not a true staff of life.

"Flour refinement," he says, "has removed virtually all the vitamins and left only a bland-tasting starchy chaser for hamburgers and such."

Sugar, he asserts, has been reduced by refinement to a mere fire in which to burn proteins.

It will be the aim of the Government experts to treat sugar to "a vitamin injection" and so return it to its former position as a food as well as a fire.

It should be said that this "minus vitamin" condition is not the fault of anybody in particular, as the changing tastes of the American people have been accompanied or met by the processors of foods, and the missing vitamins can be and will be replaced without changing the taste and appearance of the foods to which they are added.

It is the hope that through women's organizations, Parent-Teacher Association circles, visiting nurses, family physicians, schools and colleges, clinics, radio, the lecture platform and the press, the people may be awakened to the necessity of coöperating in this health movement as a necessary concomitant to the national defense.

Everyone should coöperate, at least. A healthy citizen is the first line of any country's defense.—Editorial in *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, June 25, 1941.